

# In Your Element

## Swimming is the perfect exercise - non impact, uses the whole body and gives your heart a good workout

Swimming utilizes nearly every muscle in the body and is a great way to get fit and toned. It promotes stamina, strength and suppleness. The natural buoyancy that water offers means that we don't experience the same stress or jarring on the body that we might experience from land-based exercises; also making it excellent for muscle rehabilitation. So how do we take advantage of this great sport/hobby?

### Swimming Clubs

Clubs are scattered all over London and most of them will take swimmers of all abilities, novice, intermediate or advanced and welcome people of all ages. Many allow casual swimming, but a few might be restricted to members only. If you have a great stroke, skimming across the water feels great and is an awesome way to get fit. But if you don't quite consider yourself a master swimmer yet, it might be a plan to get some tips and coaching on your technique. London local clubs: [www.actonswimmingclub.org.uk](http://www.actonswimmingclub.org.uk) or [www.spsc.org.uk](http://www.spsc.org.uk) (South London Swimming Club)

### Equipment

There isn't a lot of equipment involved in swimming, but if you are planning on going all the way – you may want to know a bit more about what is on offer. Many swimmers are using full body suits now as they say that it gives them more core support and glide after tumble-turns. There are still swimmers that remain faithful to the trunks. Their argument is that one crease in a body suit can slow you down.

Goggles are one of the only pieces of equipment that you can legally use in competition. Goggles obviously offer your eyes better protection and also allow you to see more clearly underwater. And now they can also be ordered with prescription lenses. Caps made from latex, plastic or lycra are also legal and serve the same purpose as a body suit. They improve glide in the water as they stop your hair from dragging. Flippers, kickboards, floats, earplugs and other accessories can usually be bought at or through your local swimming club.

### Swimming Programmes

For those that are just beginning a swim-fit programme try avoid burning yourself out with lots of non-stop laps. Start with one length (25m) and then rest for 30-60secs.

Week one – 10 laps

Week two – 20 laps

Week three – 20 laps (break every 4 laps)

Week four – 40 laps (break every lap)

Week five – 40 laps (break every 4 laps)

Week six – 40 laps (break every 10 laps)

As you progress into your training week, begin to shorten your rest period in between laps. Start at 45-60 second breaks and decrease your recovery time by five seconds per session.

Once you can swim a km you are on your way to declaring yourself swim-fit and approaching that so-desired swimmers physique. Please remember that because swimming is a non-weight bearing



activity, it will not strengthen or build bone density. So weight-bearing activity is imperative for muscle strengthening and injury prevention. Here are a few exercises that will add some strength to the most utilized swimming muscles.

#### Straight-arm pull-downs

Open a door to a 45° angle, now loop a resistance band over the top. Kneel down in front of the door, so that the line of the key-lock is centered between your pecs. With straight but not locked arms, pull the band down alongside your body, just past your hips – a one second contraction and return to the starting position. 4 sets of 25 repetitions.

#### Press-ups

Start with a standard push-up, feet together, and hands slightly wider than your shoulders. With a straight back, lower your chest down to about one fist height off the floor. 10 repetitions. Followed by hands into a triangle position under you, elbows pointing outwards and another 10 repetitions. The last variation is hands under your shoulders and this time when you lower yourself, keep your elbows close to your sides.

#### Track-training

A long swimming race would start off slowly and pick up progressively to a sprint at the end. Simulate the aerobic – anaerobic cross over by jogging 100m, sprinting 30m and then jogging again. 5 sets and then rest for 3 minutes (do this 3 times).

#### Lunges

Will teach your glutes, hamstrings and quadriceps to work synergistically. A good swimmer will need these muscles to be functional as they propel him/her through the water. Step forward into a lunge until both legs are bent at 90°, step back to the starting position and then into a backward lunge. Back and forth 15 repetitions each way x 4 sets.

See you on the start blocks with the Thorpedo. 



Luke Taylor trains his clients at the Imperial Rowing College in Putney, in parks, homes and even in their offices. For more info contact Luke at:

[personaltrainer@inlondon.com](mailto:personaltrainer@inlondon.com)

or visit [www.taylormadephysiques.com](http://www.taylormadephysiques.com).